

SPATIAL VARIATION IN EXTRACTION OF GRASSES IN WESTERN HIMALAYAS : A CASE STUDY OF SOME SELECTED VILLAGES IN RAMNAGAR FOREST DIVISION, JAMMU AND KASHMIR

DR. SHYAMAL SARKAR

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY,
POST GRADUATE GOVERNMENT COLLEGE, SECTOR – 11, CHANDIGARH.

ABSTRACT

Himalayas are considered, and rightly so, as a delicate mountain eco-system. It is ecologically fragile system, as mentioned its geological and morphological settings. The plight of Himalayas is still more serious in respect of diminishing forest cover. Many species have already been eliminated, replaced or are in the process to reach this stage soon.

Biotic-interaction with forests is the mutual action between two biological active systems – one which receives energy from the sun, undergo photosynthesis, converts this energy into biomass and the other thrives on the energy so produced i.e., man and animals. Thus the biotic interaction in the present study is taken as a mutual action between forests – a tremendous store house of energy and the consumption behaviour (patterns) of this energy by man and animal kingdoms in the most fragile Himalayan eco-system in which our study area lies.

The livestock rearing is an important economic activity in the zone under study. Further the lack of land available for cultivation due to hilly terrain of the region makes the people to dependent on livestock. The climatic conditions allow the cattle to graze only for 182 days in a year at the best and for the rest of the period these livestock are stall-fed. Although agricultural crop residue is used as a fodder for stall-feeding, but it remains far less than required. The people here, therefore, have to depend upon forests for grasses and tree leaves to meet this demand. As such the man in these hilly region depends heavily on the forests for obtaining grass as fodder for his livestock resource.

The grasses from the forests are not available throughout the year. Being biological in nature, the grasses have a specific period of growth and maturity. The man in this region is quite familiar with the life cycle and the species of the grasses found here and hence is capable of planning for their harvest.

KEY WORDS: Ecology, Biotic Interaction, Photosynthesis, Stall feeding.

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